

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

YOUR GUIDE TO

VEHICLE SECURITY



POLICE HEADQUARTERS
610 FIFTH AVENUE, SEATTLE WASHINGTON 98124

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Seattle Police Department is to prevent crime, enforce the law and support quality public safety by delivering respectful, professional and dependable police services.

PRECINCT LOCATIONS



Seattle Police Headquarters
610 5th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98124



East Precinct
1519 12th Ave.
Seattle, WA 98122



North Precinct
10049 College Way N.
Seattle, WA 98133



South Precinct
3001 S. Myrtle
Seattle, WA 98108



Southwest Precinct
2300 SW Webster
Seattle, WA 98106



West Precinct
810 Virginia St.
Seattle, WA 98101

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Seattle Neighborhood Group

www.sngi.org



www.seattle.gov/police

For additional copies, contact your local police precinct or
the Seattle Neighborhood Group at (206) 323-9666.

FACTS ABOUT VEHICLE CRIME

You are more likely to be a victim of a vehicle crime than any other crime reported to the Seattle Police Department. The following are some recent statistics about Seattle:

- More than two-thirds of all auto thefts occur at night.
- Over 8,000 vehicles were stolen in the city of Seattle in 2002.
- Approximately 86% of the vehicles stolen were recovered.
- The average loss of missing parts on recovered vehicles is \$5,800.
- It can take an expert thief as little as seven seconds and one screwdriver to break into a vehicle and less than one minute to drive away.
- Cars are most often stolen for their parts. This includes airbags which have become a desirable commodity.

While statistics like these can be discouraging, you can take steps to reduce your risk of becoming a victim of a vehicle related crime. Following are some basic prevention techniques you can take to protect yourself and your vehicle.

WHY ARE CARS STOLEN?

Cars are stolen for a variety of reasons. Most thefts fall into one of five categories:

- **Commercial operations** - This includes theft rings and chop shop operations.
- **For use in another crime**- Often cars are stolen to use in other crimes such as robberies, burglaries and narcotics activities.
- **Juvenile joyriding** - Juveniles often steal cars to obtain status or just for “thrills.” Juveniles often do not go to jail for stealing cars.
- **Insurance fraud** - Owners of a vehicle decide to give up their car by arranging to get it stolen or burned to collect insurance.
- **Exchanges for drugs** - Drug addicts loan their cars to drug dealers in exchange for drugs. The drug dealers commit other crimes with the loaned vehicle. If they are caught, these loaned vehicles are then reported stolen by the addict.

AUTO THEFT PREVENTION

Most cars are stolen by amateurs who are not highly skilled. There are some simple, common sense precautions that will make your car less of a target:

- Turn off your vehicle and lock both your ignition and your doors *whenever* you leave your car. Theft often occurs when people leave cars running at gas stations, ATMs, or even in their own driveways.
- Completely close all of your windows when parked.
- Park in a well lit area.
- Park in lots that have attendants.
- If you have a garage, use it. Keep the garage and any doors leading to it locked and keep your car doors locked inside the garage.
- Thieves often “tow” away cars. You can make this more difficult by parking your vehicle with the wheels turned toward the curb. If your car is rear-wheel drive, back into your driveway. If front-wheel drive, pull forward. Use your emergency brake when you park.
- Never leave the registration or title in your car.
- Drop business cards or other identification inside vehicle doors.
- Engrave your driver’s license number preceded by the state letters (WA D.L.) or your car’s Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) on any removable equipment in your car.
- Protect your vehicle with an anti-theft device or join a prevention program. (See page 4)
- Replace “T-Shaped” door locks with straight locks so thieves cannot grab them with an implement through a crack in the window.

CAR PROWL PREVENTION

Car prowl is not a legal term, but it refers to theft from a vehicle and/or property damage that occurs while trying to gain access to a vehicle. It is by far the most prevalent vehicle related crime reported. To avoid a car prowl you should:

- Never leave valuables in your car. If you must, make sure that nothing of value is within plain view. Even pocket change is enough of an enticement to some thieves.
- If your stereo has a removable face, *always* take it off and take it with you when you leave. Don’t forget to take your CDs or store them out of sight.
- Stow valuables *before* you park the car.
- Scan the area for suspicious persons before stowing items in your trunk.
- If your car is stored in a carport or parked near your house, leave your exterior lights on throughout the night.
- Consider an anti-theft device for your airbags.
- Add locking lug nuts to protect your wheels and tires from theft.

CARJACKING

Carjacking is an especially frightening crime, as it usually involves a direct confrontation with a car thief. Carjacking usually occurs when criminals need to flee the scene of other crimes, as part of a gang initiation, or because some cars are easier to steal when the owner is there with the keys.

- Areas that carjackers target are: intersections controlled by traffic lights or stop signs, parking garages, shopping malls, grocery stores, gas stations, car washes, ATM machines, residential driveways, highway exit and entry ramps.
- Be alert to your surroundings, even when you are rushed.
- When approaching your car, have your key in your hand, and check the back seat before you get in.
- If someone is loitering near your unoccupied car as you approach it, keep walking until the person leaves.
- Be wary of people asking for directions or handing out flyers. Trust your instincts – if something makes you feel uneasy, get into the car quickly, lock the doors and drive away.
- Avoid driving alone. Have someone with you, especially at night.
- When you come to a stop, leave enough space to maneuver around other cars.
- In extreme situations, you might even consider going through a traffic light, as long as you can do so without causing an accident.
- Don't stop to assist a stranger whose car has broken down. Instead, drive to the nearest phone or use your cell phone to call the police for help.
- If you are driving home and notice someone you don't recognize loitering, drive around the block and come back after the person has left.
- Avoid parking near anything that limits your visibility.
- Most importantly - If a carjacker threatens you with a gun or other weapon, give up your car. Don't argue. Your life is worth far more than a car!
- If someone takes your car, get away from the area as quickly as you can. Try to remember what the carjacker looked like and report the crime immediately to the police.

ANTI-THEFT DEVICES & PROGRAMS

CAR ALARMS

Alarms make loud warning signs when the door, hood, or trunk of a car are tampered with. Most alarms have motion sensors, impact sensors and an audible alarm around 120 decibels. Alarms can run anywhere from \$150-\$1,000 depending on the features. Please be aware that within the City of Seattle, owners can be cited if a false car alarm fails to re-set itself within five minutes.

VIN ETCHING

Every car has a unique Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) that is kept in databases that can be accessed by law enforcement agencies. However, in the event that your vehicle is stolen, these VIN numbers can be tampered with or removed. VIN etching is a process where the car ID number is etched onto all car windows. This provides a strong visual deterrent to thieves, who would have to replace all the windows of the car before reselling it. Washington State Patrol supports a free VIN etching program, or you can also contact your local auto body shop.

ELECTRONIC DISABLING DEVICES

An ignition kill switch is a hidden switch that needs to be turned on before the car will start. To work well, they must be hidden well. “Immobilizers” and “Passkeys” work on similar principles. Please be aware that some warranties are nullified if a kill switch is installed. Electronic keys are an installed electronic system that only allows the vehicle to operate with a correctly coded key.

METAL DISABLING DEVICES

There are a variety of locking metal devices that can disable everything from your gearshift, gas pedal, brake pedal, hood, tires or protect your steering column from breakage. The most well known of these devices are steering wheel locks. This is a long, locking metal bar that fits on a steering wheel to prevent it from being turned. The steering wheel lock also acts as a good visual deterrent.

“LOJACK” PROGRAM

“LoJack” is a private security system, that assists law enforcement by locating stolen vehicles. If an owner has a LoJack unit installed in their vehicle, and the car is reported stolen, the VIN number is entered into the Washington State Patrol database. This turns the LoJack unit on in the stolen vehicle, which activates a signal that can be picked up by special tracking equipment installed in police patrol cars. Find out more at: www.lojack.com

“WATCH YOUR CAR” PROGRAM

“Watch Your Car” is a national *voluntary* vehicle registration program. Vehicle owners sign an agreement stating their vehicle is not normally used between the hours of 1:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m. and they receive a decal to place on the car. If a police officer observes a vehicle with this decal being driven anywhere in the United States during these hours, they may stop the vehicle and verify it is being operated by the vehicle owner, or a person designated by the owner.

Find out more at: www.cityofseattle.net/police/Programs/WatchCar

CALLING 9-1-1

CALL EMERGENCY 9-1-1 WHEN:

- When you have a Police, Fire or Medical emergency.
- To report a crime that is in progress, or has just occurred.
- There is a situation that could, or does, pose a danger to life, property, or both.
- There is suspicious activity involving a Person(s), or Vehicle, that appears criminal in intent.

Please Note: Seattle Police 9-1-1 calltakers have immediate access to interpreters, who can assist them in communicating with callers, and TTY machines at every station. If you are outside the city and need to report an emergency that is occurring in the city limits call (206) 583-2111. 9-1-1 calls from pay phones are free.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU CALL 9-1-1:

Remain patient and calm while the 9-1-1 calltaker asks you questions. 9-1-1 calltakers are trained to ask specific questions to quickly determine what is wrong, and what type of assistance to send. Please stay on the line until the calltaker tells you to hang up. Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- Where?** Where did this occur? Did it happen on the street, inside, outside, in front or in back, etc.?
- What?** What happened?
- When?** How long ago did this occur? Is the event still in progress?
- Weapons?** Are there any weapons? Are drugs, or alcohol involved?

Additional questions that might be asked are:

- How many people are involved, and what ages?
- Are they on foot or in a vehicle?
- Personal Descriptions: Race/Sex/Age/Build Clothing. Operators will generally ask for a clothing description from top to bottom, and outside to inside.
- Vehicle Descriptions: Color/Year/Make/Model/License Plate Number and State.

THE SEATTLE POLICE NON EMERGENCY LINE: (206) 625-5011

Reasons for calling the non-emergency number include, but are not limited to the following:

- You want to report a nuisance, such as a noise or parking complaint.
- To report a non-emergency crime, one that did not just occur, and the suspect(s) are not in the immediate area.
- You have questions about something suspicious occurring in your neighborhood, and you are not sure it is criminal activity.